

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4395

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, NU

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMANS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT
SOMOZA, SEPTEMBER 18, 1976

REF: MANAGUA 4281

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMANS REAFFIRMATION OF U.S. POLICY OF COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH GON BASED ON MUTUAL INTEREST WAS WELL-RECEIVED. HOWEVER, SOMOZA EXPRESSED CONCERN AT WHAT HE BELIEVES IS AN "ANTI-SOMOZA FACTION" IN THE DEPARTMENT AND ALLEGED EXPRESSIONS OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT BY DEPARTMENT OFFICERS. CONTINUING U.S. CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (PHYSICAL ABUSES OF PERSONS BY GOVERNMENTS) IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESS AND PUBLIC WAS UNDERLINED. SOMOZA STATED THAT STATE OF SIEGE LIKELY WOULD BE TERMINATED IN NOVEMBER. HE ALSO SHOWED INTEREST IN AID PROGRAM LEVELS PROJECTED FOR NICARAGUA OVER NEXT FEW YEARS AND AGAIN QUESTIONED DELAY IN APPROVAL OF EXPORT LICENSE FOR PURCHASE OF M-16S AND OTHER ARMS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT SOMOZA RECEIVED ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMANS, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR, IN HIS OFFICE AT NOON ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1976. THE MEETING WHICH INCLUDED LUNCH, LASTED NEARLY THREE
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AND A HALF HOURS.

3. WHILE THE DISCUSSION RANGED OVER A WIDE VARIETY OF TOPICS, THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS RAISED MAY BE SUMMARIZED BRIEFLY AS FOLLOWS:

A. U.S. POLICY. SHLAUDEMAN EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT TO CENTRAL AMERICA AND REAFFIRMED U.S. POLICY OF FRIENDLY, CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH NICARAGUA BASED ON MUTUAL INTEREST. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT HE APPRECIATED THIS FRANK RESTATEMENT OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS NICARAGUA AND HIS GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID, HE WAS DISTURBED AT CONTINUING REPORTS HE HAS RECEIVED THAT DEPARTMENT OFFICERS, IN THE EMBASSY AND IN WASHINGTON, WERE HOSTILE TO HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT. HE MENTIONED GERALD SUTTON, FORMER EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER, AS AN EXAMPLE OF AN EMBASSY OFFICER KNOWN FOR HIS ANTAGONISM TOWARDS HIS GOVERNMENT AND OPEN SYMPATHIES WITH THE ANTI-SOMOZA OPPOSITION. HE ADDED THAT JUST LAST MONTH HE HAD RECEIVED ANOTHER DISTURBING REPORT FROM AN AMERICAN FRIEND WHO HAD RECEIVED A DEPARTMENT BRIEFING ON NICARAGUA. HIS FRIEND CLAIMED THAT HIGHLY CRITICAL STATEMENTS ABOUT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN MADE BY THE NICARAGUAN DESK, WHICH ALLEGEDLY HAD BEEN DESCRIBED AS "CORRUPT". SOMOZA EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND DISMAY THAT A DEPARTMENT OFFICER WOULD ENGAGE IN SUCH CHARACTERIZATIONS. SHLAUDEMAN SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY BIAS AGAINST HIS GOVERNMENT, AND ASSURED THE PRESIDENT THAT THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT PASS JUDGMENT ON FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS.

B. HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATE OF SIEGE. SHLAUDEMAN OUTLINED THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON THE GENERAL QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HE SAID WAS AN ISSUE OF CONTINUING CONCERN TO THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESS, AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. HE DREW A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN OUR CONCERN ABOUT PHYSICAL ABUSES OF PERSONS (TORTURE, KILLINGS AND THE LIKE), AND THE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT EXISTING IN PARTICULAR COUNTRIES, WHICH WAS A DOMESTIC AFFAIR. U.S. POLICY WAS TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES. SOMOZA DESCRIBED FSLN ACTIVITIES AND THEIR COSTS IN TERMS OF HUMAN SUFFERING, MENTIONING A FIGURE OF ABOUT ONE THOUSAND PERSONS KILLED (INCLUDING FSLN MEMBERS, NATIONAL GUARD PERSONNEL, AND OTHERS) OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE STATE OF SIEGE HAD BEEN INTRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE FSLN LOS ROBLES ATTACK IN DECEMBER, 1974. HE SAID THAT
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THE FSLN CONTINUED TO FOMENT INTERNAL UNREST WITH CUBAN SUPPORT, BUT LACKED A POPULAR BASE. HE ASSERTED THAT THE STATE OF SIEGE WOULD BE LIFTED SOON, PROBABLY NOVEMBER, AS THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL'S INTERROGATIONS AND INDICTMENTS COME TO AN END.

C. APPROVAL OF M-16S AND OTHER ARMS PURCHASES. SOMOZA RAISED THE QUESTION OF DEPARTMENT APPROVAL OF THE SALE OF M-16S AND OTHER ARMS TO HIS GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT THESE ARMS WERE REQUIRED TO

REPLACE OLD EQUIPMENT, AND INDICATED HIS CONCERN OVER THE DELAY IN OBTAINING EXPORT LICENSE APPROVAL. HE POINTEDLY REMARKED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS BASED ON MUTUAL COOPERATION. NICARAGUA WAS PREPARED TO HELP ITS FRIENDS AND EXPECTED THE SAME TREATMENT IN RETURN. SHLAUDEMAM REPLIED THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER UPON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON TO SEE WHAT ACTION MIGHT BE TAKEN SOON. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF SHLAUDEMAM WOULD GIVE THIS MATTER HIS PERSONAL ATTENTION.

D. PROJECTED AID PROGRAM LEVELS. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WISHED TO GAIN A CLEARER NOTION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF FOREIGN AID RESOURCES THAT MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO THE GON OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT AID PROGRAM LEVELS WERE PROJECTED FOR NICARAGUA. SHLAUDEMAM SAID THAT THIS MATTER WAS PRESENTLY UNDER REVIEW AND THAT THE AMBASSADOR WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT TO EXPECT UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW.

4. COMMENT: WHILE THE CONVERSATION WAS CORDIAL, SOMOZA SHOWED HIS CONTINUING SENSITIVITY TO WHAT HE IS CONVINCED IS AN ACTIVE "ANTI-SOMOZA" FACTION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S VISIT CLEARLY WAS APPRECIATED AND SEEMED TO REASSURE SOMOZA OF THE USG'S INTEREST IN MAINTAINING MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW SERIOUS SOMOZA IS ABOUT BRINGING AN END TO THE STATE OF SIEGE, AN OFTEN REPEATED BUT THUS FAR UNFULFILLED INTENTION. THERE ARE SOME SIGNS OF LOOSENING OF CENSORSHIP AND THE WORK OF THE MILITARY COURT IS NEARING COMPLETION. BUT AN UPSURGE IN FSLN ACTIVITY AND RENEWED COUNTER-INSURGENCY SWEEPS WOULD PRODUCE A FRESH CROP OF PRISONERS THAT COULD BE USED TO JUSTIFY CONTINUATION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE, AS HAS BEEN THE PATTERN IN THE PAST. SOMOZA CONVEYED IN STRONG TERMS HIS GROWING CONCERN OVER DELAYS IN APPROVAL

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OF EXPORT LICENSES OF THE M-16S AND OTHER ARMS PURCHASES, REPEATING WHAT HE HAD RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR (SEE REFTEL. THEBERGE

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